Mechanical Memories Magazine

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Mechanical Memories Magazine

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Editorial

Hello again, and welcome to issue 25. Thanks for all the letters and emails I've received as a result of my comments last month, and in particular to those who have made suggestions for improving the viability of running auctions. I had intended publishing a few of your letters in this issue, but have decided against it as I think there is a risk of 'over-doing' the auction thing; as it turns out, there wasn't enough room anyway. Suffice to say, there does appear to be a genuine demand for Jeremy and me to continue to run these events, so I haven't totally ruled out an auction in November. Whether there is enough demand remains to be seen. I've asked for your views on the following page, so please read carefully, as I need to receive sufficient response before committing to an event in November.

Many thanks to John Peterson, Robert Rowland and Johnny Burley, who have all contributed articles this month, and have between them almost filled the magazine. The result being, I have had to write very little this time – more of it please! I know I keep banging-on about contributions from readers, but at this time of year (my busiest), there really is a limit to how much time I can commit to writing for the magazine.

Well, that's just about all for now. You should all receive this issue toward the end of the month, a little later than usual, and the next should be out at the end of July. I've done this, as I have the last two years, in order to close the gap between the July and September issues (remember, there's no magazine in August).

So, until next time

All the best

Jerry

News and Coming Events

November Auction

As I've stated on the previous page, I haven't totally ruled out an event in November, but I do need some feedback. From the letters I've received over the last few weeks, several have made the point that we should perhaps give more notice of the date. This is a fair comment, and a point that I think Jeremy and I should be mindful of for the future. I therefore intend to make the decision whether or not to go ahead with the November event over the next couple of weeks, so that I can announce the date in the next issue of the magazine. It's important that I do this, as there is no magazine in August, and I don't want to leave it till September.

The next thing to consider is the location. If we could continue with two events each year, I think the pattern we've established so far would be ideal, i.e. the November auction in the Midlands and the spring event further south. However, as I think it is clear that two events a year is not viable, where do we hold the 'one'? It would seem logical to go for the Midlands, but there does seem to be a consensus for somewhere further south (not necessarily Sarratt, but that general area).

So here's what I need to know:

- 1. Do you want an auction, and more importantly, will you come?
- 2. Will you be entering machines?
- 3. Where should it be held?

Please write or email as soon as possible, because if I do not receive sufficient feedback, there will definitely be no event in November. There are other issues to consider too, in particular the costs involved in running these events, so time is of the essence!

More Auction News

Cameo Auctioneers will be conducting an auction on 16th September, which will include approximately eighty vintage amusement machines, including some 1930s pinballs. I hope to have more information next month, but can at least confirm that the auction will be held somewhere in Berkshire.

Dates for your diary

Venues Carters' Fair will be visiting in the coming weeks:

28th & 29th June – Clissold Park, Finsbury

4th – 6th July – Priory Park, Muswell Hill

11th – 13th July – Boxmoor Common, Hemel Hempstead

19th & 20th July - Chippenham, Wiltshire.

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Great Dorset Steam Fair $27^{th} - 31^{st}$ August Tarrant Hinton, Dorset

Auction of Vintage Amusement Machines 16th September More details next month

Bonhams Mechanical Music & Collectables Sale 30th September Knowle, Nr Coventry

Jukebox Madness 25th & 26th October Kempton Park racecourse

Chicagoland Show 14th – 16th November Illinois, USA

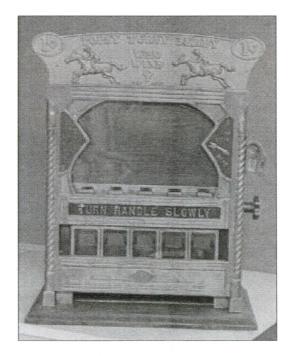
Bonhams Fine Mechanical Music Sale 18th November Knightsbridge

MMM Vintage Slot Collectors' Show & Auction (date TBA) More details next month

Topsy-Turvy over Sweeney Todd

By John Peterson

My success at finding unusual British coin-op games surprises even me from time to time. Today's story is one such example. Several weeks ago, I was cruising Ebay looking for the good, the bad and the ugly. Like many collectors of more modest means, I do not shy away from a machine that 'needs work.' I enjoy the challenge of bringing some poor orphan back to health and the price discount is an added attraction. I have been stung in the past, getting in over my head with a restoration that is beyond my capabilities, but that is part of the risk you take when you purchase an item known to be less than perfect. (I won't go into the cases where an item is deliberately misrepresented. That is a story for another day). The item I was looking at was a coinflip by the name **Topsy Turvy Derby**. Perhaps you saw it advertised? Take a look at the picture below.



The more discriminating among you might be asking, "What is this British game-nut doing looking at American games in the first place?" This is a fair question. My answer is that I look at everything. Part of what fascinates me about this hobby is the opportunity to research items with which I am not familiar. There is more opportunity for research into the English-made games since much less is known about them, particularly here in America. Also, although I rarely purchase an American coin-op piece, I am interested in all the different machines that were made, whether they are English, European or American. I just happen to love the British games more.

Let me take time here to sing the praises of another American collector, Greg McLemore and his 'International Arcade Museum' web site. If you have not been to the site, you're missing out of a terrific resource tool. Whenever I find an American machine that I do not recognize, I go immediately to Greg's site and see if I can track down the game. Greg provides a terrific public service and we all are in his debt for his efforts to educate and promote the hobby. When I saw Topsy Turvy Derby offered for bid on Ebay, I went to International Arcade Museum to see what I could find. What I discovered was there are no books containing a picture of this game. Topsy Turvy Derby was listed as one of those machines that was "on a list of games made from 1931 to 1939 which was published in the January 1940 issue of the Coin Machine Journal," quote-unquote from the International Arcade Museum site. That suggested to me the game might be fairly rare. As I looked more closely at the picture on Ebay, I realized the machine was actually a Fields 5 Jacks with the top marquee missing. In its place, someone had attached the 'Topsy Turvy Derby' metal marquee.

I must admit, I love pieces that are mis-identified. I wrote to the seller and told him my suspicions and asked him to examine the top of the case for signs that the single metal casting original to 5 Jacks had been broken away and the Topsy Turvy Derby marquee added after the fact. He wrote back to me and confirmed that I was correct. Being a man of integrity, the seller corrected his listing and thanked me for my sharp eye. Being a British game-nut, I did not bid on the piece and for those interested, it did not sell. No one offered the initial asking price. After the auction closed, the seller of Topsy Turvy Derby emailed me and inquired what it was I collected. When I responded, "English coin-op machines," he replied, "I have a British game that I've had for a long time." Let's pause here for a moment. What do you think was running through my mind at that very instant? If you guessed, "Find out what this fellow has, at all costs!" then you are correct. I asked for a photo plus description and what came back was a rare working model by Fred Bolland called **Hell's Kitchen** from the early 1950's.

The 'working model' is a very narrow field of British coin-op that has no true American counter-part. The closest cousin in our inventory would be the arcade pieces like **Peppy the Clown**, but even its name suggests the pathetic nature of the comparison; we are clowns when compared to these fabulous British machines. Peppy merely jumps about in response to basic inputs from the customer. The true British working model is a virtual diorama of activity, all of which is compelling subject matter, sometimes comedic and sometimes tragic, but never boring. They invite the visitor to deposit the required coin into the slot, then, like the carnival barker, the machine goes into action, drawing us closer to see the amazing story unfolding behind the glass.



John's newly acquired Bolland Hell's Kitchen, in French crane case.

The first English working models appeared in the last quarter of the 19th Century in Great Britain. These early models utilized clock-wound automatons originally produced by French clockmakers. These active figures were incorporated into wood cases and surrounded by supporting scenery to tell a story. As time passed, English artisans began producing home-grown pieces for their own domestic market. One of the earliest manufacturers was John Dennison of Leeds. His first machines were clock-wound models that dated from the 1880's. His early pieces involved subject matter like 'The Wonder Musical Fairy Fortune Teller' and 'Mother Shipton', another fortune teller. He also produced domestic scenes as well, like 'Poor Father', a father taking care of a baby while the mother sleeps, and 'The Miser', a Scrooge-like character haunted by apparitions. All of Dennison's working models were handmade and of very high quality.

John Dennison died in 1924. One of the things that make his story interesting is that his three daughters carried on the business after he passed away. In some cases, they modified models previously made by their father, changing them from clock-wound mechanical power to electricity. In other instances, they changed the scene within the original machine to portray a different story. After several years of running the business, the girls began producing new machines of their own creation. The Dennison working models are highly respected and highly sought after to this day.

The working model had other manufacturers as well. One of the best known was Fred Bolland of London. Starting out as an operator, Fred expanded his business in the 1930's to include sales of coin-operated machines. After WW II commenced, Fred ran an arcade in Wales. When the War ended, he moved back to London and began acquiring stock from other operators. During the war, rationing had a severe impact on arcades. For one thing, manufacturers were unable to produce new machines due to the severe restrictions on all metals and materials for any use other than the war effort. In a related area, the normal toys and candy put as prizes into crane games evaporated. As a result, cranes became useless. Operators, unable to find any product for their cranes, sought to get rid of them. Fred had the foresight to appreciate the opportunity presented. He went around and bought up all the Exhibit Supply cranes he could at ridiculously low prices. Using the cases and the gearing inside the cranes, he fashioned a whole line of working models. Most of the themes for these machines exploited the frailties of the human condition. His more famous titles are self-explanatory: The Drunkard's Dream; The Miser; The Burglar; The French Execution and so forth.

If you've been following my stories these past several years, you know that my fascination with British machines stems in no small part from my appreciation for their 'humanity' with the lower case 'h.' In many instances, this humanity is evidenced by the small numbers produced of any one machine, all handcrafted by artisans in diminutive workshops around the country. In the case of working models, I think this humanity is well represented by the fact that Fred Bolland made do with whatever he could find, utilizing useless American crane games by Exhibit Supply to house and operate the majority of his early working models. If he could not find American cranes, he was happy to adapt French crane games as well. When the supply of both American and French cranes finally dried up, Fred was forced to manufacture his own cases. He and his younger brother, Arthur, did so into the 1970's, building cases that looked like a modernized version of the original 1930's Exhibit Supply casework with the addition of a clown face at the very apex of the case.

Enter Sweeney Todd and Johnny Depp. Have you seen the latest offering from Tim Burton, 'Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street' starring Johnny Depp? If you like musicals and/or Depp, you must see this film. Dearly Beloved loves both. She has openly stated that she would leave me in a New York minute if Johnny Depp ever raised his pirate eyebrow in her direction. Fortunately for me, Mr. Depp lives in France. My Ebay friend had an original Bolland working model in a Bonzini and Sopransi French crane case titled **Hell's Kitchen.** The theme of this machine is essentially the story of Sweeney Todd. (Story spoiler; if you haven't seen the movie and plan to do so, stop reading <u>now</u>).

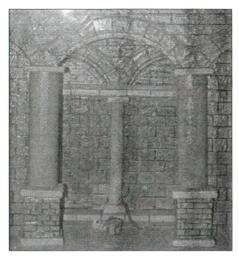
Photo 1 is a close-up of the two doors behind which all the action takes place. Photo 2 is the left side door open into the castle. Inside, you see a poor fellow having his head cut off by the executioner. The ghoul saws away until the head falls off and drops into the basket at the foot of the bench. The left side door closes and the right side door opens. The next movement is the opening of the door to the chimney-oven. Inside the oven, the top of the cooking pot rises, pushed up by the severed head that is being cooked inside the pot, Photo 3. The door to the oven closes and the Devil, Photo 4 swings into view, displaying the head as a pie. The writing under the Devil's platter blithely assures us, "No pain." Whew! That's reassuring.

What's not to love about an arcade machine that celebrates the dismemberment of some poor fool and the subsequent culinary delight of devil's food pie? Further discussion with the seller revealed that he purchased this terrific game 35 years ago at an auction in Lansdowne, Pennsylvania, According to the seller, the auction contained many British arcade games. (Author's note. This agrees with my research that found a large number of British arcade pieces making their way to the States in the late 1960's and early '70's). After the Ebay seller purchased Hell's Kitchen at auction, he found himself unable to transport it home, lacking a vehicle large enough to accommodate the machine. He first called his wife and told her he had won a large British game at an auction. She asked, "What is it?" He replied, "I don't know; it cuts off heads." He then called her father to see if his father-in-law would loan out the use of his station wagon for transport. The father called his daughter to get more information on what this machine was and she replied, "He's gone nuts. He's bought a guillotine." They were expecting their first child and space in their small house was at a premium. In spite of either obstacles or good common sense, he brought Hell's Kitchen home where it entertained one and all from 1973 until 2008.

In the face of such a wonderful story, how could I pass up this magnificent piece? Besides, through research I knew this 'Kitchen' to be one of only four. Prior to my discovery of this machine, only three were known to exist and this one was rarer yet, being the only one in a French case. We went back and forth and eventually came to an agreeable price. Hell's Kitchen now resides at my house, reminding all who view it that no one is totally without redeeming social value; you can always serve your fellow man as a tasty pie. I also like to remind Dearly Beloved that I now have my very own Johnny Depp and he dances to my tune!

All my stories have a moral. This story is no different. We enjoy a hobby where accurate information is many times treated as a premium to be hoarded and used only for personal gain. Had I done so here, it is doubtful that I would ever have discovered Hell's Kitchen. On the other hand, you can share your knowledge with those around you, enriching others who might share your interest in the wonders of coin-op. The return to you may be as surprising as it was to me. As I discovered, it can be a real topsy-turvy world.

John Peterson (USA)



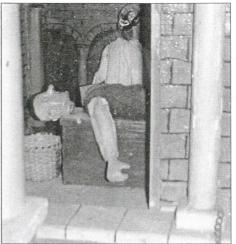


Photo 1 Photo 2

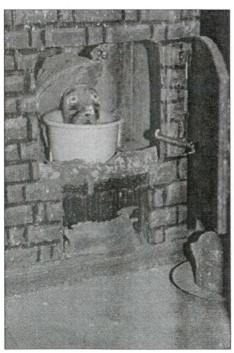




Photo 3 Photo 4

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The Jolly Bobby

By Johnny Burley

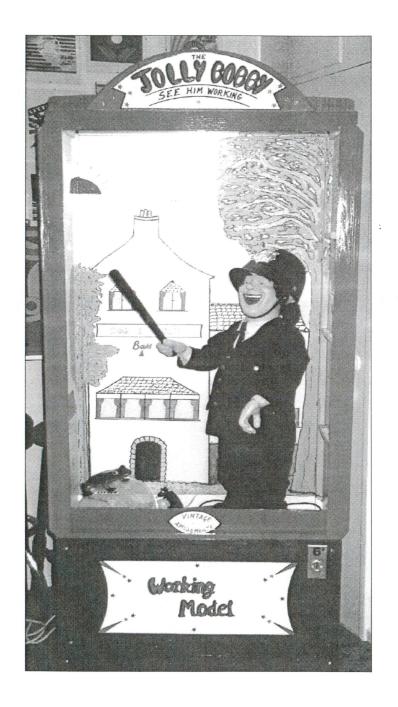
I thought readers might be interested in a 'project' I've just finished. Now I'm a pensioner, I have the time to do these things (although the wife would say there are more important jobs to do around the house). Anyway, some weeks back I purchased an 'Electric Automaton Policeman' on Ebay, from a female dealer in Chester. He stands 36" high on a base (containing the electrics), and when plugged in, he moves his head from side to side and waves his truncheon. I don't know his age or history, but just thought he would be a good buy.

I made his cabinet by utilising an old 1940s wardrobe, which was ideal. I fixed a light inside and painted a background scene, with a little artwork on the cabinet front. Now finished, the whole thing is quite large, as you can imagine, but I'm quite chuffed with the results. It's just a pity there is no coin mech. on it, but I've put a dummy coin slot on the front. The four grandkids are fascinated by it!

Editor's Comment

Thanks for telling us about your project Johnny, I must say, it looks really great. It was a good idea using a wardrobe for the case – what did the missus say when she found all her clothes bundled up in black bin sacks? As you say, it's a pity it's not coin-operated, but I'm sure this could be done quite easily with an electronic timer.

Anyway, I guess there must be many others out there who have undertaken similar projects in the past, or even built machines from scratch. Maybe a relatively simple drop-case wall machine, or perhaps something larger and more complex. I'm sure we would all be interested to hear about your home made machines, so if you've built anything in the past, please get in touch so that I can feature it in the magazine.



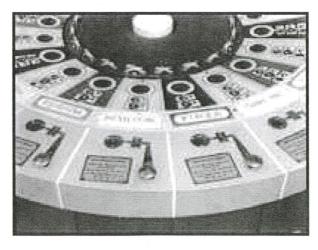
Summer 1966 Penny Arcade Memories

By Robert Rowland

We moved to Mablethorpe on the Lincolnshire coast in 1965 when I was aged ten, and the next five summers were spent going round the local amusement arcades. Enjoy some of my memories of times which unfortunately will never return.

We eagerly awaited Good Friday. This was the day that the arcades, which had been closed all winter, would reopen for the season. We waited with anticipation, wondering if the attendant who had been there the previous summer would still be in. If he was, the chances are we would be kicked out before a single penny could be spent. The doors open....he was there! (Little did we realise at the time, but even though the arcades were closed, the same staff had been kept on all winter by the owner). Surprise, surprise, we were allowed in (for this day at least). All the tricks we had learned the previous summer would have to be put on hold, best to wait until the arcade filled up and the attendant's attentions would be focused elsewhere.

One of our favourites was the **3d Derby-Racer**. We noticed the winning shilling (12d) horse was only moving about five or six places each spin. We were running round this machine chasing the shilling horse, inserting the thre'penny bit seconds before the 'play now' light went out and the revolving horses stopped. Odd times we were seconds



The 20 player Derby-Racer.

too late (this meant the 3d bit was returned), but most times we got the shilling (4 x 3d) or the winning horse just slid past, and we had missed it by one! That summer we emptied most of the twenty sections on numerous occasions, without being disturbed by the attendants. Eventually they sorted it, and the horses were flying round, making it impossible to predict.

Another nice little earner in the summer of '66 was a four player (two each side) **Gold Cup**. A large sized rubber ball was propelled onto the playdeck, ran through a section of pins and landed in either Royal-Tan, Teal, Nickel-Coin, Dante or Early-Mist, and the winning amounts were 2d, 4d, 6d, and 12d. For one whole season, the machine was kicking the ball twice! So if the normal kick 1st ball went down quickly, there was this 1st kick (which it shouldn't have done) chucked the ball onto the playdeck while 'bet now' was lit, so as the ball was heading into the winning section, I was one side and my best mate was the other side. As the ball went into, say Dante, we rushed our penny into Dante and hoped the 12d win light would light — you still ended up with a minimum of 2d. We emptied both sides on numerous occasions, how they never cottoned on to what was happening, I will never know!

In another of the arcades was a giant six-player crane. As well as the plastic toys, brooches, chalk cats etc., the whole base was filled with liquorice torpedoes! The times

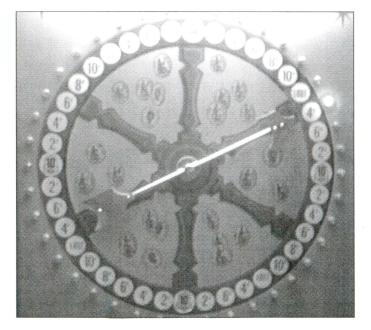


Bryans six sided crane.

we went in and looked in each individual tray and found torpedoes, every tray was a treasure hunt. On one occasion, we found sweets in every section, yet in another arcade, their six player crane only contained dried peas (along with the gifts of course), which were only useful if you owned a pea shooter!

One of our major favourites was a Brenco **Wheel-of-Fortune**. This was an arrow going round in a full circle, with wins of 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12d. We worked out that the area where the arrow stopped could be predicted, by the amount of delay the machine took in starting! This system was only worked out by me and my best friend. We would stand there for long periods (when allowed to) waiting for the chance when the arrow would stop on the bob (12d). We were very successful with this machine – we emptied quite a few locally. In another arcade, an elderly attendant came up to us as we walked in and approached the wheel of fortune. He said "You keep trying to work a system out on that machine, but you can't. There is no system to any machine." I was watching the machine as he talked, I went and put a penny in the bob (12d), and it won! His face went red, then he said "Don't hang around that machine all day."

Eventually, we got known for loitering around the Wheel of Fortunes, so mother started to come around with me on certain afternoons (that meant the attendants couldn't throw me out). One day, mother had come round with me and I was playing the Wheel of Fortune in a certain arcade. I was on the winning side, the bob had been clicking out a few times. Suddenly, one of the attendants just rolled up and switched the machine off, and just walked off – never said a word! A real shock at the time.



Brenco Wheel of Fortune.

In Funland, we were chased out on numerous occasions by a little woman with glasses on. Apparently, if she caught you, you were marched into the office and your pockets were emptied of money – then you were thrown out! She never caught me in five summers! One Sunday in July, mother had come round with me. There was this giant machine: A paid 2d, B paid 2d, C paid 4d, D paid 6d and E paid 12d. I worked out that as 'play now' lit, if the light flashed on the E at that exact moment, then E would win. This had just happened, so I backed E to win on three different sections, and E won! The three different sections started to clash out 12d, when suddenly I was grabbed from behind by the little woman with glasses.....until she saw mother there! She just let go, walked away and said nothing, leaving me to enjoy a massive 3 bob win! Wonderful!

Not every attendant threw you out. Each arcade had it's bad apples, we drew up a chart when these bad apples had their days and half days off! Then we would hang around that particular arcade for most of that day. Even on other days, we were able to sneak in unnoticed, and sometimes would last in the arcade for at least twenty minutes before we were spotted and turfed out – all good stuff!

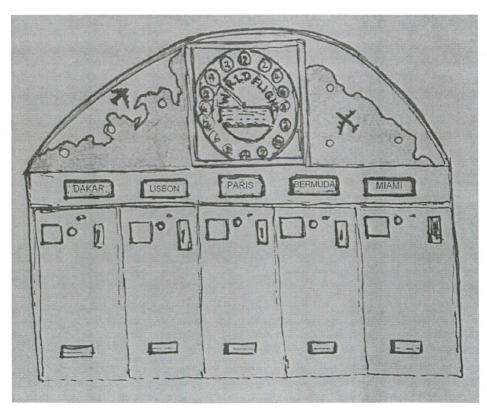
One trick (which was wrong) was we found the Streets **Wheel-Em-In** was left unlocked. The machine was situated in an out of sight position, so we would check the coast was clear, then lift the glass front up and lay the penny between the two lines of the 6d win. Then we would lower the glass and watch our six pennies come rolling down the glass! Some days we would empty all three sections of that machine.



Streets Wheel-em-In

Another large five-player each side machine was called **World Flight.** This machine had places to bet on – Dakar (white), Lisbon (green), Paris (yellow), Bermuda (blue). A giant clock at the top would revolve to display the winning amount, ranging from 2d to 12d. One day we walked in and the places were flashing as usual, but the clock was stuck on 12d. One side the attendant could see us, but the other side we could not be seen. Our hearts missed a beat as we backed each of the five places – then 2,4,6,8,10,12d every time! We emptied the five sections on that far side. Then, pockets bulging with coins, we sneaked out to the local sweet shop to treat ourselves to pop and sweets. We went back in an hour later and the payout clock was now turning – the attendant had no idea what a super day we had just had! (Another round to us).

Another little fiddle was the old 35mm film trick. This was done on penny machines that had a slide, where you pushed the slide in, e.g. **Tuck Shop** and **Flying Scot**. You would place a piece of 35mm film in the slide (covering the penny hole), put the penny on top and push in the slide to release the ball. As you withdraw the slide, the penny has not dropped through into the machine's cashbox, it has returned, held by the



Drawing of the World Flight machine.

film. On one occasion we were doing this trick on the attendant's dinner hour. We used to watch him pushbike up the road at midday, then at about 12.50 one of us would stand at the door and watch for him pushbiking back down the road. But on this occasion, he secretly returned early (unbeknown to us) and was stood behind us. Caught red handed! Which resulted in a clip round the ear, and thrown out yet again. A round to them.

One little trick I learned by chance was on the **Duchess** (one-armed bandit). Insert penny in slot with handle pressed down, and with an up and down pull you can trap the penny in a spot just before it drops down. You then pull the handle, get your go plus any payout (but keep handle down), then you slowly raise the handle until you hear a click, then the bandit will play again. You still had to pretend to be putting a penny in each go. If the attendant approached you, then you just let the handle go fully up, and the jammed coin would drop for normal play. We never got caught on this particular trick – we emptied a few Duchesses that summer.

Our final revelation is for Cromptons **Cover the Spot**. There were about four sections to one unit. Pennies used to drop into various flat tubes, wins were 2,3,4, and 9d – we were only interested in the 9d (jackpot). By looking through the glass along the side of the tubes, you could see when the 9d was full. This meant that the next penny in that nine tube would cover the spot. Hopefully you could drop a penny in and land on that jackpot tube, which would tip all nine coins into the payout tray below. Great days!

I hope you all enjoyed these true memories of incidents that actually happened, all in the swinging sixties. Let's not forget some of the other very popular penny machines of that time: Electrodart, Bradley Challenger, penny pushers, Tooty-Frooty, Win and Place, The Grand National, Tip-em-Off to name a few. The attendants of that time have now passed on, and sadly are no longer with us. But these great times happened, and the memories of those days will live on forever!

Robert Rowland

Just a reminder!

The next issue will be out toward the end of July, and there will be no magazine in August.

Lineage ads, are free to subscribers and will run for two issues, unless you Derby Day, 1960s electro-mechanical wall instruct me otherwise. Please ensure I machine by Ruffler & Walker. Must be have your ads. by the 20th of the month complete and in good working order. for inclusion in the next month's issue. Remember to include your telephone number and the area where you live. Email: robert rowland2001@yahoo.co.uk Post or e-mail to the address on page 2

For Sale

Bryans 12 Win Clock, oak case, in perfect working order and excellent condition. With cash tin, lock & keys and original paint on mechanism. £550

Chris 01483 823203 (Surrey)

For Sale

Allwin cabinet made in oak some years back but never used. Nice brass hinges but no lock. £95 plus postage.

> Cliff 01624 878311 Email cliff@manx.net for photos

For Sale

Old cast iron stand, height 3ft. Ideal base for a slot machine. Phone for details.

Les 07905 372227 (Essex)

Wanted

Wiring diagram and/or any information on 'Rotofruit' e/m wall machine.

Tony 01889 565448

Still Wanted

Top Flash for Oliver Whales Win an Aero Choc allwin. Will pay good price.

Bill 01642 710834 (Middlesbrough)

Wanted

Rob. 01507 473639

Wanted

Circle Skill wall machine, with coin return

John 01273 608620 (Brighton)

Wanted

Bagatelles, unusual or with nice graphics. Also old pre 1930s games, I.E. indoor, pub, board games etc.

Ivan 01273 401144

For Sale

Bellfruit Cascade wall machine, in good working order, on new penny play. No lock and key. £170

David 01223 312057 (Cambridge)

Wanted

Bollands working models wanted.

Les 07905 372227 evenings

Pinball Machines bought and sold

Dead or Alive!

Call Gazza 07887 926601 (Essex)

For Sale

machine by Exhibit Supply Co. In good left. £10 per set working order, on 1d play. £400

John 01273 608620 (Brighton)

For Sale

'Hi-Ball' large floor standing 1930s arcade Some Mills and Jennings repro reel strips Some original award cards – enquire. Mills 5c and 25c original sets of payout slides. £30 per set

Peter 01304 822485 (Kent)

For Sale

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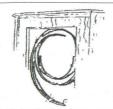
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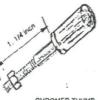
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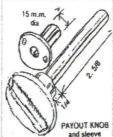
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